# DEFEND PRIDE

Direct Action Handbook

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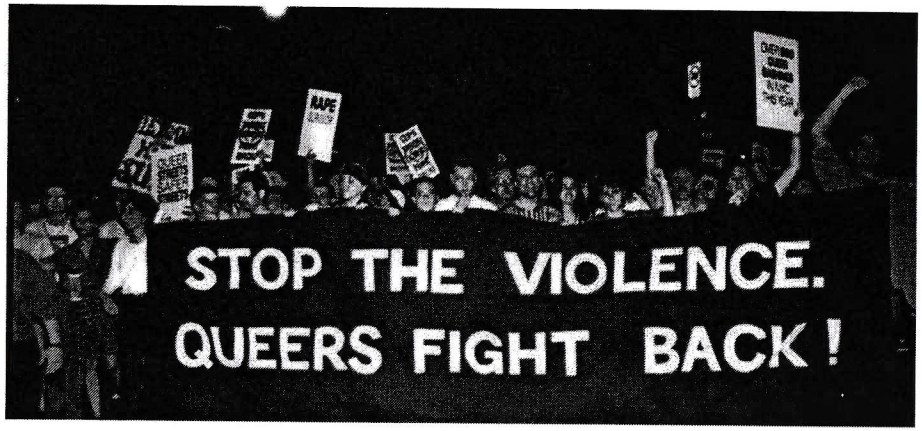
# IN TIMES LIKE THESE...

Queer people are under attack. Homophobia and transphobia have never gone away completely, but we are living through a historic resurgence. Across the United States, Republican politicians have been working to pass hundreds of bills attacking LGBTQ+ people. Meanwhile in the streets, violence against us is steadily increasing, and Proud Boys, neo-Nazis, and other hate groups attack, harass, and disrupt LGBTQ+ events. Times are tough, but we've been here before. And we know what it takes to survive it.

We know that the police won't protect us, given their documented sympathies with the far right and their history of violence towards marginalized people. Instead, this Pride month we must turn to each other to defend our community. When we come together, organize, and stand up fearlessly, we can keep each other safe – and win.

Today, millions of people celebrate Pride - honoring the rioters at Stonewall and the queer liberation movement they helped to spur forward. Anything we have now, we have because those who came before us fought for it. Now, it's our turn to stand up and fight for our right to exist - for ourselves, for each other, and for those who will come after us. In the pursuit of a better world for all of us.

## ...BRICKS WILL BE THROWN.



# FAR-RIGHT AGITATORS TO LOOK FOR

Here are a few common archetypes you may encounter harassing LGBTQ+ events, and what to expect from each

### Proud Boys

A hate group known for anti-LGBTQ+ attacks. In the past few years, they have increasingly targeting LGBTQ+ events with threats, harassment, and violence- especially all ages and drag events. **Risk of violence and attempted disruption high.**

### Neo-Nazis

Neo-Nazis are, well, Nazis. They hate LGBTQ+ people, and often commit violence against us. Some neo-Nazi groups, like the Active Club Network and White Lives Matter, have specifically focused on disrupting all-ages LGBTQ+ events. **Risk of violence and attempted disruption high.**

### Far-Right Media

Far-Right media & live streamers infiltrate activist spaces, protests, and sometimes LGBTQ+ events. They may conduct interviews with loaded questions to make interviewees look bad on camera. This can also result in doxxing and harassment later. It's best not to engage- you can block them with signs or banners instead. **Risk of violence low, risk of attempted disruption medium.**

### Preachers

Religious zealots, largely Christians, often protest against LGBTQ+ causes. Many of them are connected to more overtly violent extremists like Proud Boys and neo-Nazis, and may invite them to show up to events. **Risk of violence low-medium, risk of attempted disruption high.**

### Politicians

Liberal politicians love to exploit us with pinkwashing and rainbow capitalism, while conservatives work to take our rights away while maintaining a Grindr account on the side. Neither have our best interests at heart. **Risk of violence low, risk of attempted disruption medium.**

# AFFINITY GROUPS

*"My preparation involved getting together with trusted friends... We discussed the threats and what we could do to help the queer community in our city. Early on, it was agreed that our Pride Defense wasn't meant to gate-keep: everyone was welcome; it was all hands on deck. Word spread to other circles... It was this loose network of autonomous actors, through connected and overlapping friendship circles, that became the backbone of the Pride Defense."*

-Participant in a Pride defense affinity group in Boise, Idaho

### *WHAT IS AN AFFINITY GROUP?*

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world," Margaret Mead wrote: "it's the only thing that ever has." She was referring, whether she knew it or not, to affinity groups.

An affinity group is a circle of friends who come together to accomplish shared goals. The idea is that people who already know and trust each other can work together to respond immediately, intelligently, and flexibly to emerging situations. The mutual admiration and inspiration on which they are founded make affinity groups fulfilling, fun, effective, and very difficult to demoralize. In strong communities, affinity groups overlap to form concentric circles of organizing.

### *DIRECT ACTIONS*

An affinity group is ideal for many useful projects. Here are a few ideas...

- Participating in protests or community defense initiatives together
- Creating queer street art and counter-propaganda
- Organizing a queer event, benefit show, or block party
- Tabling at an event or starting a zine distro
- Crowdfunding & mutual aid organizing
- Starting a self defense or workout group

## COUNTER-PROPAGANDA

Far-Right groups love putting up anti-LGBTQ+ propaganda. Fortunately, the same tools are available to us, and our slogans are a lot catchier. If you see far-Right propaganda, take it down. Better yet, get together with your affinity group and put up something better in its place!

### *BANNER DROPS*

You can get cheap fabric from the discount bin at most fabric stores. Better yet, find an unattended advertising banner and re-purpose it. Paint it up and pick a freeway overpass during rush hour (or another high traffic area) to hang it. You can attach it easily with zip ties and a little practice.

### *STICKERS*

Get some pro-LGBTQ+ stickers (you can get stickers for under a dollar on some radical distro sites, or make your own with free USPS labels.) Put them up in public places, especially where far-Right stickers pop up.

### *WHEATPASTE*

Combine 1 part flour to 4 parts water in a saucepan. Simmer and whisk constantly until it is thick and smooth. Use it to put up posters, queer street art, or anything else you'd like. Brush a layer onto the desired surface, apply the poster, and brush a final layer over that. You can carry everything you need in a tote or grocery bag to keep it low key. Don't forget a rag- things can get messy. This activity is best done at night.

### *SPRAY PAINT & STENCILS*

Cut stencils out of posterboard or plastic sheeting with an X-acto blade. You can carry them with you and put up stencils around town. Pro-tip: cut out the bottom of a paper bag and replace it with a stencil. Put a can of spray paint in the bag. Now, take a walk, pausing to "rummage" in the bag, while you are really spraying the stencil into the ground. Repeat as desired. You can also forget the stencils and just spray paint pro-queer slogans up around town. Stay alert, look out for cameras, and bring a friend to keep watch. Be courteous- If it's not far-right propaganda, don't paint over other people's tags. This activity is best done at night.

## PROTEST SAFETY TIPS

When at a protest or similar event, and *especially* if shit starts getting serious around you, here are some crucial things to keep in mind to keep yourself and others safe. These tips are relevant for most rallies, marches, and community defense initiatives.

### *STICK TOGETHER AND LEAVE IN A GROUP.*

Stay in a group at the event, and make sure no one arrives or leaves alone. It's safest to walk in a group- the bigger, the better! Ask others to escort you to your car or give you a ride if needed. Offer to escort others to their cars, too.

### *STAY ALERT AND PROTECT EACH OTHER.*

Look out for each other, especially those who are more likely to be targets. Think situationally, stay calm, and get others out of harm's way if necessary. Be aware of your surroundings and provide help wherever you can.

### *YOUR PHONE IS DANGEROUS.*

Photos, videos, and live streaming can put people at risk of harassment and targeting by police or the far-right. Don't film anyone without their consent, and PLEASE don't film altercations or arrests. If you must film, film the police and the far-Right.

### *DON'T TALK TO POLICE.*

Anything you say can and will be used against you. Talking puts you and others at risk. As any lawyer can tell you, it's best not to say anything at all. Leave engaging with police to trained legal observers.

### *IN CASE OF ARREST:*

Arrest is always possible, even if you aren't breaking the law. It's important to be prepared. Find out the legal hotline number for the event and write it on your arm- if arrested, you can call this number from jail to receive legal support and bail.

# EVENT DEFENSE

Across the country, far-Right groups are attacking queer events at an alarming rate. Some say that when an event is threatened, it should be canceled for everyone's safety. But, we aren't ready to live a world where queer joy is forced back into the closet. We'd prefer to fight for our right to exist in public. So, here's a quick breakdown of how to successfully defend a queer event. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but the following tips are based on what has worked in the past.

## *WHAT WORKS:*

### Work together (when possible!)

Event defense is most effective when everyone is on the same page. Check in with coordinators about what they're comfortable with, and inform attendees of any safety precautions. This kind of collaboration isn't always possible, and if coordinators choose to work closely with police or can't compromise on tactics, it may be best to go with a plan that doesn't require their involvement.

### Secure sufficient support to gather critical mass

Get the support you need to ensure you have enough people on the ground for success. This could mean enlisting trusted friends to fill a security team of 20, or reaching out to activist groups to organize a community defense protest of several hundred.

### Know your audience

Certain tactics that not everyone will agree with may become necessary (i.e. physical violence against attackers.) This is okay, and defenders should do what they need to do to keep people safe. However, it's also worth thinking about what may or may not be appropriate and appreciated by those around you.

### Block attackers from getting near the event

Your first line of defense against far-Right agitators is to know where they are as soon as they show up, and keep them as far away from the event space as possible. In the past, human walls, angry crowds, umbrellas, bear mace, and scouting networks have all been helpful towards this end.

### Obscure your identity

Far-Right agitators live stream everything, and it's not uncommon for them to target people through "doxxing" and harassment. To avoid this, obscure your identity as much as you can. This doesn't mean you have to put a paper bag over your head- a cap, sunglasses, and clothes you don't normally wear might just do the trick. A COVID-19 mask adds extra protection.

### Safety escorts

People walking to and from events are easy targets for far-Right attackers. Get a group together and offer to give people rides or escort them to their cars, and encourage others to do the same. There is safety in numbers- the bigger the groups, the better.

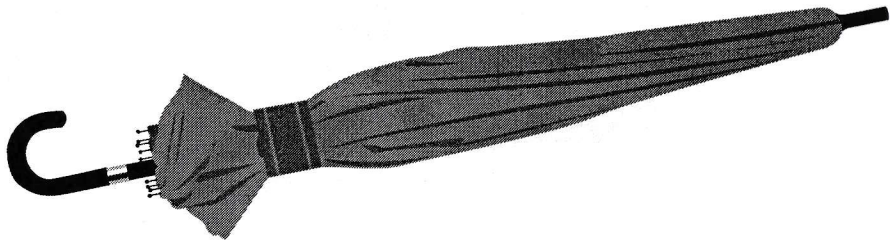
## *WHAT DOESN'T:*

### Leaving it to the police

Cops aren't here to protect us. They're the ones who beat the rioters at stonewall, and the ones who are enforcing the legislature attacking our very existence. We've witnessed numerous instances of police protecting, enabling, and looking the other way as Proud Boys, Neo-Nazis, and right wing agitators attack queer events. Cops create more danger for queer people in these situations, not less.

### Ignoring the problem

Gay-bashers and transphobes are only emboldened when their victims don't put up a fight. When Proud Boys, Neo-Nazis and other extremists show up to attack queer events, they want easy targets. If we make the risk for them greater than the return... Well, they're less likely to return.



# GAY-BASHING & SELF DEFENSE

Gay-bashing is real, and it's happening everywhere. Queer people have been targets in the street since long before the current wave of homophobia and transphobia, and as the old add-age goes, we bash back.

***WHAT WE RECOMMEND:***

**Join a self defense group.**
Find a self defense group in your area, and train. In larger cities, there may be free or low-cost self defense classes available for women and LGBTQ+ people.

**Avoid leaving alone, and offer to walk others home.**
When you can, avoid leaving gay bars or queer events alone - especially if you're intoxicated and it's after dark. Ask someone to walk with you, or use a rideshare service. Offer to walk with others who need it, too.

**Carry self defense items, fight dirty, and run away.**
Carry self defense items, and know how to use them. Pepper spray is probably best - you can use it against an attacker while still keeping your distance, and unlike a knife, it can't be deadly if turned on you. If you are attacked, make yourself a hard target. Fight back, fight dirty, and focus on getting away from your assailant.

**Start a safety patrol in your gayborhood.**
Get a group of friends together to patrol gay nightlife areas and help others stay safe. You can walk people to their cars, offer rides, do community outreach, and intervene if someone is being harassed. Safety in numbers is real. If you don't have physical strength on your side, a large group of loud, angry people is usually enough to scare off an attacker.

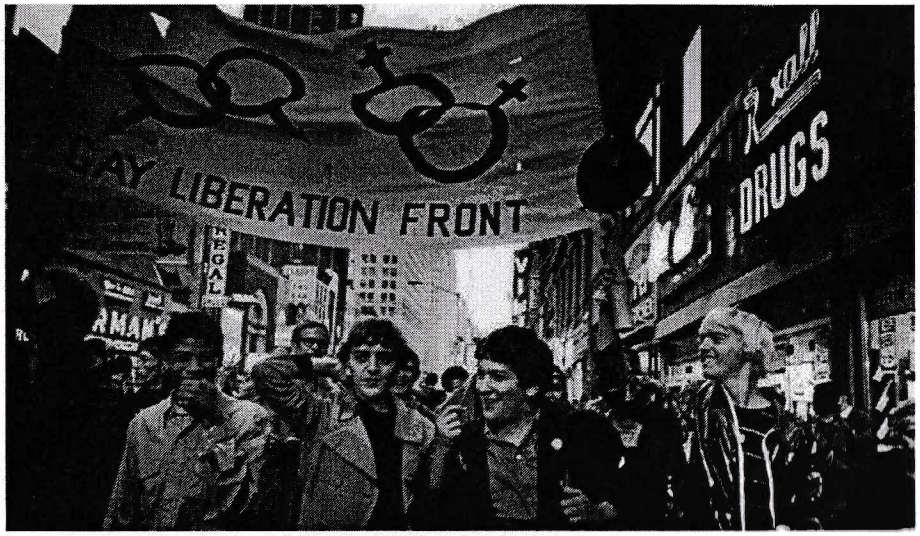
**Protect drag performers and trans people.**
Drag queens and trans people are the most likely to be targeted - especially trans women and people of color.

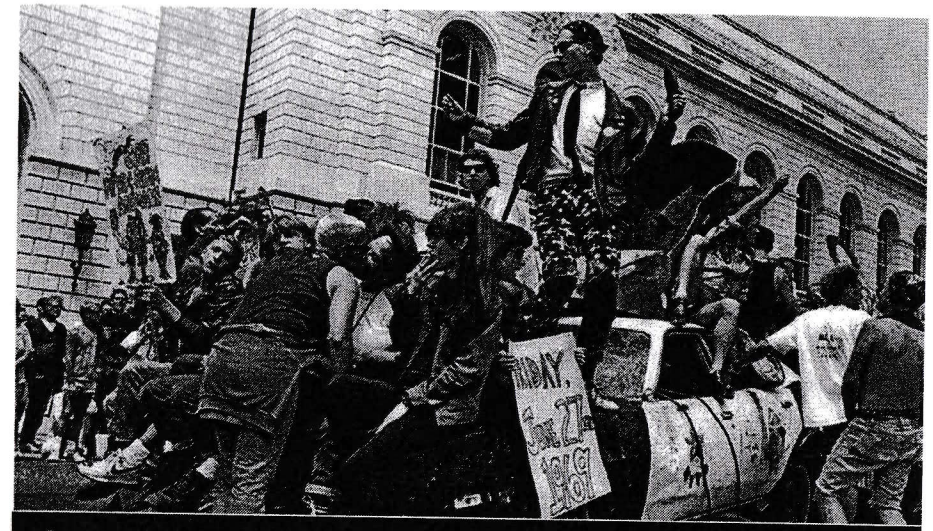
# A WORD ON SOLIDARITY

*"If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."*

— Lilla Watson

Queer people are one of the most diverse groups of humans on the planet. Our queerness unites us across all divides - race, class, gender, nationality, religion, age... Most queer people are already against other forms of oppression, both because we understand oppression so intimately and because we and our loved ones likely belong to multiple oppressed groups. Queerness is inherently political. It is inherently anti-racist, anti-fascist, anti-patriarchy, anti-ableist, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-cop. It supports sex workers, reproductive freedom, indigenous sovereignty. Our struggles extend beyond just queer liberation - we must fight for total liberation, for all people. Both because queerness encompasses all people, and because until all of us are free, no one is.





*"Burst down those closet doors once and for all, and stand up and start to fight."*

— Harvey Milk